

FOOTNOTE TO FINAL REPORT

Written December 22, 1945

The Gila River Relocation Center closed on November 10, 1945. The present writer has no first-hand knowledge of the detailed process of events after May 25. However, a brief sketch of the final phases is suitable here, from such materials as are available. These materials include: (1) Conversations with people who were in the Center after the writer's departure; (2) copies of the weekly reports of the Relocation Program Officer; (3) two community analysis reports written by Dr. A. T. Hanson, who was detailed from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center for a short period in August and September; (4) letters from friends in the Center; and, (5) general reports sent from the Washington office. Exact statistical information was not obtainable.

The Center became increasingly organized for relocation. The staffs of the Relocation Division and of the Welfare Section were augmented and the intensity of their work increased. The other staff members assisted, in their fields, as far as their other duties permitted. The Block Managers and their assistants devoted much of their time to problems of resettlement and other evacuee leaders assisted. Nevertheless, it seemed probable that, while many would leave voluntarily under existent conditions, many would remain. Fears of the material and social problems to be confronted "outside" and sheer inertia would have to be overcome by more positive action.

The following administrative changes in details of policy were made:

(1) The date for the closing of Canal, October 1, was scheduled.

(2) The Welfare Section was instructed to have plans made for all dependency cases, to be completed by August 15. This entailed repeated interviews and much correspondence with other welfare agencies. Its aim was to assist the helpless, but there was a further purpose; to show that the Center would not remain open even for the public assistance cases and would, therefore, not be available for the reluctant able-bodied.

The W.R.A. offices in the various cities cooperated by attempts to find employment and housing and were assisted by other Government agencies and by volunteer groups, both Caucasian and Japanese. In spite of the above orders and proffered assistance the rates of voluntary departure did not increase sufficiently during June and July, so other measures were resorted to.

(3) The Welfare Section was authorized to make grants for assistance before departure, rather than leaving it up to the evacuee to apply for it at his place of destination; this referred particularly to grants for furniture for those who had lost their property. This removed the fear that such grants would not be made in certain localities, and the uncertainty as to how much would be granted. This induced some to leave, but indications were that "voluntary" relocation would not solve the problems of an appreciable number of the recalcitrant.

(4) The date of closing Butte was scheduled for November 15.

(5) Early in August, an administrative notice gave the Project Director authority to schedule the date of departure of those who had not submitted plans for departure by a given date. This was the decisive action. The evacuees disliked it intensely, and many felt it to be a breach of faith, but it was accepted as final. Only 44 individuals had to be informed when they must leave, all others worked out their own plans.

The announcement of forced scheduling practically coincided with the end of the war with Japan. This had an effect that is hard to measure, but that was undoubtedly very great. It deprived all able-bodied of the last rationalization for remaining. Combined with the new administrative procedures, it made certain that the Center would close on time.

Canal closed on the scheduled date, and it was necessary to transfer only a few hospital and dependency cases to Butte. The rush from Butte mounted and the last evacuees left on November 10, five days before the scheduled date.